



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR HOWARD COUNTY

For Immediate Release:

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Laurel Man Convicted of 2014 Sexual Assault – Third Conviction in Series of Assaults

A Howard County judge has found a 59-year-old man guilty of the 2014 sexual assault of a young woman in his Laurel apartment— his third conviction in a series of sexual assaults charged by police and prosecutors from Baltimore City and Howard County. Edward Witherspoon, formerly of the 8600 block of Eastern Morning Run was convicted of one count of second-degree rape, two counts of second-degree sexual offense and one count of second-degree assault at the conclusion of a two-day trial in Howard County Circuit Court last evening.

During the trial, the woman testified that she was 22-years-old on the evening of September 6, 2014 when she went out, along with her brother and friends, to the Power Plant Live entertainment district in downtown Baltimore. During the evening, she became ill and incapacitated by alcohol, became separated from her group and recalled being escorted outside by a security guard. She testified that her next memory was discovering that she was being sexually assaulted and identified Witherspoon — a man she did not know — as her assailant.

A forensic nurse from Howard County General Hospital testified about the sexual assault forensic examination she performed on the woman, and police detectives and an analyst employed by an outside forensic laboratory confirmed that DNA evidence recovered from the victim's body matched the DNA of Edward Witherspoon.

Witherspoon's public defenders suggested that the victim's memory had been affected by her drinking. One attorney implied that the sexual encounter had been consensual and that his client displayed "zero consciousness of guilt." Baltimore City Assistant States Attorney Katherine M. Smeltzer argued that Witherspoon knew that the woman, "whether she was passed out or sleeping, she was physically helpless (and did not) have the ability to consent." Howard County Assistant State's Attorney Colleen McGuinn stated, "This is his signature; that's the crux of this. He sits outside of the Power Plant waiting for impaired women, scoops them up and takes them home where he assaults them."

In finding Witherspoon guilty on all four counts, retired Howard County Circuit Court Judge Raymond J. Kane stated the evidence led him to conclude that the victim "was substantially impaired cognitively" and was unable to give her consent. He stated that the victim's impairment "would have been obvious to anybody." The judge set a sentencing date for January 28, 2019.

On September 7, 2017, Witherspoon was sentenced to 40 years in prison for assaulting two young women in his basement apartment. A jury convicted him of the January 2016 kidnapping and sexual assault of a Loyola University Maryland female student. That trial followed Witherspoon's May 2016 trial and conviction for assaulting another young woman whom he transported from Fells Point to his basement apartment in 2015. The jury deadlocked on rape and sex offense charges before returning a guilty verdict on a second-degree assault charge. Both women were incapacitated by alcohol following evenings out at the Power Point Live or in Fells Point.